

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 304254  
ORIGIN EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 L-03 COME-00 TRSE-00 SCS-06  
H-01 HA-05 /034 R

DRAFTED BY EB/IFD/OIA:W G BLACK/AF/W:B KIRKPATRICK  
APPROVED BY EB/IFD/OIA:M P BOERNER  
L/AF:W RHODES  
L/EB:S GUDGEON  
AF/EPS:L M WHITE  
COMMERCE: J SEVER (SUBS)  
TREASURY:H SHAPIRO (SUBS)  
-----120123 220729Z /11  
R 212233Z DEC 77  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY COTONOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 304254

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EINV, DM, US

SUBJECT: CONFISCATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ASSETS IN  
BENIN

REFS: (A) COTONOU 1849, (B) STATE 281549, (C) COTONOU 1733,  
(D) STATE 265684

1. AF/W OFFICER ACCOMPANIED JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REPRESENTATIVE TO BENINESE EMBASSY ON DECEMBER 14 TO DELIVER ANOTHER COPY OF CLAIM AND REITERATE OUR VIEWS PER REFTEL D. BENINESE EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE SADELER REPLIED THAT HE REGRETTED THAT EMBASSY STAFF HAD FAILED TO BRING THIS MATTER TO AMB BOYA'S ATTENTION EARLIER AND THAT HE WOULD DO SO IMMEDIATELY. SADELER ALSO NOTED THAT BOYA DUE TO TRAVEL TO COTONOU IN JANUARY AND COULD TAKE UP MATTER  
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WITH GPRB AT THAT TIME.

2. INTERAGENCY EXPROPRIATION GROUP CONSIDERED WITNESSES CASE AT DECEMBER 14 MEETING. GROUP NOTED WITH APPROVAL THAT GPRB IS ACTIVELY CONSIDERING CLAIM. IN VIEW OF HISTORY OF SLOW RESOLUTION OF OTHER CASES BY GPRB THERE WAS DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL STEPS WHICH COULD BE

TAKEN TO ENCOURAGE GPRB TO SETTLE CLAIM. ONE POSSIBLE STEP WE COULD TAKE WOULD BE TO ASK THE IBRD TO RAISE THE MATTER DURING FINAL STAGES OF CONSIDERATION OF 13

MILLION DOLLAR PORT DEVELOPMENT LOAN IF GPRB HAS TAKEN NO ACTION TO SETTLE CLAIM BY FEBRUARY. THIS WOULD NOT BE AN INVOCATION OF LEGISLATIVE SANCTIONS BUT SIMPLY AN EFFORT TO BRING ADDITIONAL LEVERAGE TO BEAR ON GPRB. INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS OF U.S. EXPROPRIATION CASES BY IBRD HAS BEEN USED IN PAST, AND IT EMPHASIZES THAT IMPACT OF EXPROPRIATION EXTENDS BEYOND BILATERAL CONSIDERATIONS. POST COMMENT ON THIS APPROACH IS REQUESTED.

3. DURING THE BRIEFING OF THE EXPROPRIATION GROUP ON GENERAL STATUS OF US-GPRB RELATIONS, IT WAS NOTED THAT RECENT COMMERCIAL DISPUTE (BENNETT/HAMZA) WAS BEING PURSUED IN LOCAL COURTS. GROUP ASKED IF LOCAL COURTS MIGHT ALSO BE ABLE TO DETERMINE WITNESSES' CLAIM IN FAIR MANNER. POST IS REQUESTED TO ASSESS WHETHER LOCAL COURTS COULD GIVE FAIR HEARING IN THIS CASE. IF AD HOC COMMISSION FOR PETROLEUM CLAIMS OR OTHER ESTABLISHED ADMINISTRATIVE CHANNELS WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR RESOLVING WITNESSES' CLAIM, THESE SHOULD ALSO BE ASSESSED. YOUR ASSESSMENT SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT FACT THAT

WITNESSES WERE BANNED AND PROPERTY CONFISCATED ON POLITICAL  
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CAL GROUNDS. AT YOUR DISCRETION, YOU MAY APPROACH GPRB TO OBTAIN INFORMATION FOR THIS ASSESSMENT. VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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